DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 229 798 CS 207 596

AUTHOR Wilkins, Lee
TITLE Humankind, Nature and the New Journalism: A Return to the Mythopoeic.
PUB DATE Aug 83
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (66th, Corvallis, OR, August 6-9, 1983).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Intellectual History; *Literary Devices; Literary Styles; *New Journalism; News Reporting; *News Writing; Philosophy; *Romanticism
IDENTIFIERS *Journalism History

ABSTRACT

The New Journalism, which uses literary techniques usually restricted to fiction, has been categorized and analyzed from a number of perspectives, but little effort has been made to delineate its intellectual and philosophical roots. The New Journalism arose from the intellectual tradition of Romanticism, as opposed to Classicism, the movement that dominated traditional journalism. The adoption of Romanticism meant that journalists could form a world view in which humankind was considered an inseparable part of nature, subjective perception had an equal place with that of the omniscient observer, and knowledge could be acquired through personal experience rather than through exclusive reliance on logic and scientific modes of inquiry. The result has been that New Journalists have not only adopted a wider variety of literary techniques than those employed by traditional journalists, but have also been willing to explore areas that traditional writers have considered "impossible" to cover. This expanded world view has resulted in a return to an ancient epistemological foundation: a mythopoeic world view. This return has meant that journalism's intellectual milieux has for the first time placed an equal emphasis not only on what is known but also on how that knowledge came to be acquired. This change in emphasis has profound implications for the types of reporting journalists attempt as well as the results of that reporting. (FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

QUALITATIVE STUDIES

ED229798

HUMANKIND, NATURE AND THE NEW JOURNALISM:

A RETURN TO THE MYTHOPOEIC

By

Lee Wilkins
Assistant Professor

School of Journalism
University of Colorado

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Lee Wilkins
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Presented to the Qualitative Studies Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Corvallis, Oregon, August 1983.

CS 207 591

HUMANKIND, NATURE AND THE NEW JOURNALISM:

A RETURN TO THE MYTHOPOEIC

Lee Wilkins
Assistant Professor
School of Journalism
University of Colorado
Boulder, CO 80309

ABSTRACT

The new journalism -- or journalistic writing which uses literary techniques traditionally restricted to fiction -- has been categorized and analyzed from a number of perspectives, but little effort has been made to delineate the genre's intellectual and philosophical roots.

The new journalism, or preferably literary journalism, actually arose from the intellectual traditional of romanticism, as it began in Europe and was transplanted to this country. The romantic view of the world implies a different epistomological approach than that of the classic movement, an intellectual movement which had tended to dominate traditional journalistic writing. Literary journalism's return to romanticism meant journalists could adopt a world view in which humankind was considered an inseparable part of nature, in which subjective perception had an equal place with that of the omniscient observer's vantage point, and in which knowledge could be acquired through personal experience rather than through exclusive reliance on logic and scientific modes of inquiry. The result has been that literary journalists have not only adopted a wider variety of literary techniques than those employed by more traditional writers, but that they have also been willing to explore areas -- such as the human psyche -- which traditional journalism has logically and objectively considered "impossible to cover".

The result of this expanded world view -- at least for literary journalists -- has resulted in a return to an ancient epistomological foundation: a mythopoeic world view. This return to the mythopoeic means that journalism's intellectual milieux has -- for the first time -- placed equal emphasis not only on what is known but also on how that knowledge came to be acquired. This change in the traditional emphasis has profound implications for the types of reportage journalists will attempt as well as the results of that coverage.

Presented to the Qualitative Studies Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Corvallis, Oregon, August 1983.

Classicism and Romanticism: The Initial Dichotomy

> Whatever the differences between the leading Romantic thinkers... there runs through their writings a common notion, held with varying degrees on consciousness and depth, that truth is not an objective structure, independent of those who seek it, the hidden treasure waiting to be found, but is itself in all its guises created by the seeker.
>
> Isaiah Berlin[1]

Western intellectual history, at least since Plato's groping into the cave of the ideal, has been a study in dichotomy. In the search of "ideal" thinking, western culture enshrined rationality. In search of "ideal" literature, Aristotle's Poetics extolled the virtue of unity. Rational humankind became an entity unto itself -- to the point where centuries later Descarte's "I think; therefore, I am" became a good working definition of an increasingly solipsistic race.

Journalism, too, has not been immune from 2000 years of cultural tradition. As noted by Joseph M. Webb, in "Historical Perspectives on the New Journalism", traditional journalism -- or classical reporting -- has clung to the lengthy western intellectual tradition of belief in rational thought, faith in the discoverability of an external reality, uniformity of outlook, statism and atomism.[2] Webb also asserts that the reason the so-called new journalism, which could be more appropriately labeled literary journalism, created such a furor in both academic and professional circles is because literary journalists adopted an essentially "non-classical" -- or romantic view -- of their universe and their work. Yet, the adoption of an essentially romantic view -- one which emphasized emotion, internal reality, diversity and wholism -- carried with it another set of problems. While the romantic -- or literary -- journalists were free to explore new writing techniques and to ask different sorts of

questions about their subjects than were traditional journalists, the romantic point of view still left them with an essential separation. While romanticism united the writer with the natural world, the romantic emphasis on individualism did little to provide the necessary artistic empathy of one human for another. It was only when literary journalists began to cross this last boundary -- the link between human and human, coupled with a renewed link between humankind and nature -- that the literary journalism would begin to explore a new -- yet ancient -- definition of reality.

Classical Roots

Although the precise roots of the Greek dichotomy between irrational and rational thought are lost to antiquity, scholars have speculated that the western tradition itself began when humankind abandoned mythopoeic thought for a more structured, intellectual approach. Mythopoeic thought -- largely the realm of the ancient philosophies and religions -- differs from modern, rational thought in emotional attitude rather than through the use of a pre-logic mentality.[3]

> The basic distinction between modern thought is between subjective and objective....Thus it creates an increasingly wide gulf between our perception of the phenomena and the conceptions by which we make them comprehensible. We see the sun rise and set, but we think of the earth as moving round the sun....In the immediacy of primitive experience, however, there is no room for such a critical resolution of perceptions. Primitive man cannot withdraw from the presence of the phenomena, because they reveal themselves to him in the manner we have described. Hence, the distinction between subjective and objective knowledge is meaningless to him....

For example, under Egyptian mythopoeic thought, the gods arose from nature, and the pharaoh arose from the gods -- each inextricably interwoven with the other. Imagine the shock to the mythopoeic mind

of the rational, western intrusion of Moses who challenged a mythopoeic culture.

The Biblical confrontation illustrates the most basic of western dichotomies. The Pharaoh, as rooted in a mythopoeic tradition, was believed to have arisen from nature, to be a god by virtue of this connection with nature, and through this somewhat mystical linkage, to have control over natural events. He was confronted by men who said that their god ruled nature. Humankind was connected to Jehova through the processes of supplication and obedience -- not through some mythopoeic identity. The fact that Aaron's staff-turned-serpent consumed those of Pharaoh's allegorically illustrated the emerging intellectual notion that humankind was somehow fundamentally disconnected from nature.[4]

The Greeks would refine that dichotomy to include a separation between psyche and soma. Some 2,000 years of western intellectual history would refine it still further until modern western humankind came to believe that it was not only distinct from the natural world but was capable of controlling both the nature within the self and the nature without it.[5]

> When people in the nineteenth century spoke of nature, they usually meant nonhuman nature. This came out brilliantly in such an essay as Emerson's Nature. The touch of the vernal wood is here expanded to include the hills, the streams, and the meadows, and it is interesting to observe that Emerson never seems to include a human being as part of nature....The ideal was complete objectivity and, as far as possible, the elimination of the human equation.

It is largely this nineteenth century notion of nature which has permeated much of classical reporting -- not consciously but as part of every writer's funded memory of universal epistomological constructions. Early twentieth century reporting used such a

philosophical buttress to portray man as nature's adversary or as nature's conquerer. Jack London, in 1906, described the San Francisco earthquake as follows:[6]

> The earthquake shook down in San Francisco hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of walls and chimneys. But the conflagration that followed burned up hundreds of millions of dollars worth of property. There is no estimating within hundreds of million the actual damage wrought. Not in history has a modern imperial city been so completely destroyed. San Francisco is gone.

Note that within this imperial construction -- just as on Walden pond -- no human being appears.

The extensive coverage of Charles Lindberg's flight several decades after reveals a similar outlook. In this case, a single man, using well understood principles, had conquered nature -- or at least the air between New York and Paris. Reportage of World War II, particularly coverage of the Pacific theater, emphasized that the Americans battled the "nature" of the jungle and the sea as well as the Japanese.[7]

By the time World War II ended, modern classical journalism had adopted as its primary epistomological base the notion of objectivity. Such objectivity, or separation of self from an event, is clearly evident in the reportage of Gandhi's assassination.[8]

> NEW DELHI -- JANUARY 30 -- Mohandas K. Gandhi was assassinated today by a Hindu extremist whose act plunged India into sorrow and fear.
>
> Rioting broke out immediately in Bombay.
>
> The seventy-eight-year-old leader whose people had christened him the Great Soul of India died at 5:45 p.m. (7:15 a.m. EST) with his head cradled in the lap of his sixteen-year-old granddaughter, Mani.
>
> Just half an hour before, a Hindu fanatic, Ram Naturam had pumped three bullets from a revolver into Gandhi's frail body, emaciated by years of fasting and asceticism.

Such reportage is made all the more ironic by the fact that it was Gandhi himself, emerging from a different cultural tradition, who pointed out the fallacy of separating self from nature, which included other humans.[9]

> A few hours before the end Gandhi was asked by a foreign journalist, "How would you meet the atom bomb...with nonviolence?" He answered, "I will not go underground, I will not go into shelter. I will come out in the open and let the pilot see I have not a trace of evil against him. The pilot will not see our faces from his great height, I know. But that longing in our hearts -- that he will not come to harm -- would reach up to him and his eyes would be opened."

Indeed, the juxtaposition of the reportage of Gandhi's death with Gandhi's own view of life's essential linkages, probably provides the most telling commentary on how this classical view of nature had emeshed itself in traditional journalism.

While it would be incorrect to say that this separation of humankind from nature has completely dominated traditional reporting -- indeed, coverage of the environmental movement of the past two decades perhaps provides the best evidence that it has not -- it would be equally incorrect to ignore the role such an intellectual stance has played in western culture and hence, in journalists' coverage of it. This divorce from nature, this divergence from mythopoeic thought and outlook, has provided journalists with a unique sort of objectivity.

And, at the same time, it has provided the seeds for its own rebellion -- one which attempts to return journalists to the romantic tradition and from there to a more comprehensive understanding of mythopoeic humankind in the late twentieth century.

The Romantic Tradition[10]

> Within the first important fact confronting us is that classicims must begin by making, by manufacturing, its unity. Then when this artificial unity has been enforced long enough to have become habitual, classicism pretends that it has been found ready made in nature. This explains why the classical

> period used the two words Reason and Nature interchangeably, and why the romanticists, in repudiating classical Reason, had to give nature an entirely different meaning.

Although unity might demand it, western intellectual tradition has not been uniformly classic. The most visible challenge to the supremacy of logic and classicism began in the seventeenth century in Europe when the Romantics began the intellectual battle to have their epistomological vision included as a possible alternative to the classic search for the single ideal.

This period has been termed the Romantic revolt by many intellectual historians. Its lay definition probably includes nothing more than a vague notion of "anti-classicism" -- in other words, the Romantics did everything the classicists did not. However, as H.G. Schenk notes, the romantics were not merely rebelling against the prevailing world view.[11]

> In the romantic period, as will appear in detail later, this problem was to create a new world on the ruins of the old....Whence we conclude that romanticism is first of all constructive and creative; it is what may be called a solving epoch, as against the dissolving eighteenth century.

The first problems which faced these intuitive romantics -- for few would be considered philosophers -- was to find a basis for their emerging gestalt. Classicism had created a set of conventional rules and abstractions -- and the romantics needed an alternative. "For substance they turned to the world about them; they tried to meet the claims of every existing reality, both internal and external."[12] While the movement had been brewing in Europe for well over a century in both France and Germany, it was Jean Jacques Rousseau and his delight in nature and the concept of the "noble savage" which gave the Romantics their first real focal point. Rousseau's work, particularly his treatise on the nature of the social contract and

the noble savage reforged the link between man and nature which was dissolved when rationalism overtook mythopoeic thought.[13] Rousseau rejected the western separation of humankind from nature. His invention of the noble savage, who, it must not be forgotten, needed human community as well as a natural one, may have been his attempt to heal the longstanding intellectual breach.

Thus, the romantic tradition not only reunited man and nature, but allowed emotions an equal place with rationalism. Perhaps no romantic writer better expressed the change in view than William Wordsworth, whose language in describing his supreme moments of consciousness with the universe borders on the mystical.[14]

The romantic movement itself went through several developmental stages, (realism, symbolism, also called impressionism, and naturalism) which encompassed the same major thrust. In addition to seeking a closer relationship with nature and placing as much reliance on emotion as on rationality, the romantics enthroned individualism and an internally perceived reality. Much of this philosophical grounding was evident in the lives of romantic artists themselves[15] -- many of whom lived on the extremes of accepted society, lifestyle and certainly thought. Romanticism thus came to imply "not only risk, effort, energy; it implies(d) also creation, diversity and individual genius."[16] While most of the philosophical framework was provided by artists, the German philosopher Nietzsche's focus on the self -- and on the super-self -- provided perhaps the most rigorously argued definition of the new romantic reality.[17]

American writers also became a part of the movement. Because the vastness of the continent itself had become emeshed in the American psyche, by the early 1800s American romanticism differed in

surprisingly few ways from its European counterpart.[18]

> But an examination of major American writings from the time of Poe and Emerson onward soon reveals that their central philosophy and symbolic structure are analogous in most respects to what is found, somewhat earlier, in the major writers of England and Germany. Even given the cultural lag in those days between Europe and the United States, there is a continuity in consciousness of both sides of the Atlantic that recommends a theory of Romantic culture and consciousness that can include all western literature of the period.

Thoreau and Emerson, among America's best known Romantics, both fashioned their work on an intrinsic empathy with nature. Although American pragmatism and the Enlightenment demanded that the traditional classic constraints not be abandoned entirely, both writers refused to let the classical dichotomy between man and nature or the quickening pace of scientific discovery obscure from their vision an essential delight in nature and the natural world.

Romanticism Enters Literary Journalism

> Romanticism will exist in human nature as long as human nature itself exists. The point is (in imaginative literature) to adopt that form of romanticism which is the mood of the age.
>
> Thomas Hardy, Journal, November 1880
> The Early Life of Thomas Hardy

Just as writers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had begun the chafe under the constraints of classicism, so did twentieth century journalists also begin to question the constraints of their self-imposed objectivity. They had a substantial amount of cultural help in their thinking. As early as the 1920s, a young Walter Lippmann, fresh from the defeat of Wilson's 14 Points and the Treaty of Versailles, began to ruminate about the impossibility of public rationality given "the pictures in our heads." However, Lippmann never questioned the capabilities of educated rationalism. Meanwhile, an obscure Viennese doctor had the termidity to suggest that internal reality could alter perception of external reality in certain

significant ways. While journalism was to remain at real odds with Freud's theories for more than fifty years, his ideas nonetheless began to change long-held cultural conceptions. Finally, a young physicist named Einstein proved to almost everyone's satisfaction that not only was everything relative but that something so seemingly tangible and objective as mass could be converted -- with just a little work -- into something so intangible as energy. Clearly, journalists, as chroniclers of their culture, could not help but be influenced by these epistomological shifts.

While many writers -- among them Stephen Crane in Maggie Girl of the Streets,[19] had experimented with romanticism's offshoot, naturalism, in the late 1800s, it wasn't until the following century that working journalists began to question the composition of the reality on which their objectivity was based. One of the first to do so was James Agee, whose journalistic masterpiece, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, contains considerable philosophical discussion of Agee's inability to separate himself -- as a human and, therefore, natural being -- from the Alabama sharecroppers he was sent by Fortune magazine to cover. Agee often says he wishes he were a camera:[20]

> For in the immediate world, everything is to be discerned, for him who can discern it, and centrally and simply, without either dissection into science, or digestion into art, but with the whole of consciousness, seeking to perceive it as it stands: so that the aspect of a street in sunlight can roar in the heart of itself as a symphony, perhaps as no symphony can: and all of consciousness is shifted from the imagined, the revisive, to the effort to perceive simply the cruel radiance of what is.

For Agee, there was no dichotomy of perception between nature and man or between himself and his subjects. He adopted a romantic perspective in the hopes of expanding his own vision to include[21]

> ... a universe, luminous, spacious, incalculably rich and wonderful in each detail, as replaced and natural to the human swimmer, and as full of glory, as his breathing: and that it is possible to capture and communicate this universe not so well by any means of art as through such open terms as I am trying it under.

What Agee refused to call art, Tom Wolfe about thirty years later dubbed the "new journalism," although his description of the genre relied so heavily on literary terms for explanatory power that it is difficult to understand why Wolfe simply did not label such writing literary journalism. But, Wolfe's contribution was more than a mere catch phrase. The romanticism which Wolfe brought to his work was that of a Ph.D. in American studies with a rare gift for devining and then describing what can only be called the nature of the American culture itself. Thus, it was Wolfe who expounded on the culture of the 60s in his Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test.[22] More than two decades later he plunged even more deeply into central American cultural traits when he used a test pilot's phrase the "right stuff" to describe that peculiarly American mixture of curiosity, guts and foolhardiness as a metaphor not only for the space program but for the nation which believed it was important to put a man on the moon.[23]

As had their literary counterparts two centuries earlier, the literary journalists included in their work an attempt to bridge the dichotomy between man and nature. While all made the attempt in different settings, few were more successful than Hunter S. Thompson whose disciplined reportage of the Hell's Angels contained the astounding revelation -- to both reader and author -- that there was a little bit of Hell's Angel in Thompson himself.[24]

> So it was always at night, like a werewolf, that I would take the thing (Thompson's chopper) out for an honest run down the coast. I would start in Golden Gate Park, thinking only to run a few long curves to clear my head....but in a matter of minutes I'd be out at the beach with the sound of engine in my ears, the surf booming up on the sea wall and a fine empty road stretching all the way down to Santa Cruz....
>
> But with the throttle screwed on there is only the barest margin, and no room at all for mistakes. It has to be done right....and that's when the strange music starts, when you stretch your luck so far that feat becomes exhilaration and vibrates along your arms....
>
> The edge is still out there. Or maybe it's In. The association of motorcycles with LSD is not an accident of publicity. They are both a means to an end, to the place of definitions.

While Wordsworth would hardly have called a motorcycle <u>any</u> form of natural experience, it is clear that the nature of the bike on the one hand, and the nature of the woods on the other, allowed both writers to achieve what the romantics called a mystical experience.

Other literary journalists discovered their connection with nature -- or at least what humankind was capable of doing to nature -- in less pleasant ways. Michael Herr in <u>Dispatches</u> described in bloody detail the impact of the Viet Nam War on the countryside of Vietnam. More significantly, Herr does not seek to extricate himself or his readers from the destruction.[25]

> Sometimes the chopper you were riding in would top a hill and all the ground in front of you as far as the next hill would be charred and pitted and still smoking, and something between your chest and your stomach would turn over. Frail grey smoke where they'd burned off the rice fields around a free-strike zone, brilliant white smoke from phosphorus, deep black smoke from 'palm, they said that if you stood at the base of a column of napalm smoke it would suck the air right out of your lungs. Once we fanned over a little village that had just been airstruck....Then we dropped, hovered, settled down into purple lz smoke, dozens of children broke from their hootches to run in toward the focus of our landing, the pilot laughing and saying, "Vietnam, man. Bomb 'em, and feed 'em, bomb 'em and feed 'em.

Tom Wicker, a most traditional journalist, discovered his own internal reality when he was summoned to Attica prison -- not by the authorities, but by the inmates themselves who saw in the southern, white reporter if not an ally, at least an impartial mediator. Wicker's own self doubts are plain -- if in the third person -- in his book about his role in the Attica riots, A Time to Die.[26]

> Despite what the world called good fortune, Tom Wicker was a disappointed man who believed he had fallen short. Having turned 45 three months before the Attica authorities hauled Leroy Dewer and Ray Lamorie off to the box, he was overweight, affluent beyond his sense of decency, a writer who feared he had written nothing that would last, a political commentator who believed he preached mostly to the converted. He secretly doubted his own character and openly questioned many of the values of the society in which he lived.

Wicker was obviously ripe for a romantic experience -- although the events at Attica hardly paralled the pristine innocence of Wordsworth's flights into nature. But the issue -- extricating the reporter and his perceptions from the story itself -- which had so troubled Agee in his work during the Depression provided no similar ethical dilemma for Wicker. He was part of the story. He knew it, and he believed that his writing was enriched by the involvement.

Thus, the literary journalists of the twentieth century -- with little philosophical deliberation -- had adopted many of the tenants of the romantic movement. They had united themselves with the natural world, as it was defined in the twentieth century. They had allowed emotion an important and sometimes crucial place in their work. And they had begun to rely on an internally defined reality to help explain the objective facts to which traditional journalists had been welded. There remained only one more intellectual hurdle for the literary journalists to clear.

The Romantic Dilemma

While traditional romanticism had forged a new reality -- one which did not oppose classicism so much as offer an alternative to it -- the romantic definition of the world contained within it at least one major contradiction. When the romantics heralded the role of individualism and internal perception, they stumbled over the complications surrounding the modern ego. Traditional romanticism, as defined in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, included a Catch 22. While the submersion of self in the romantic experience solved the problem of humankind's alienation from nature, it did little to relieve the problem of reintegrating the individual into human society.[27] Faced with 2,000 years of cultural tradition, much of it grounded in accepted scientific thought, the romantics began -- at least as early as the work of Rousseau -- to grapple with the problems of psychological introspection. What they lacked was a way to universalize their experience, to reunite psyche and soma in a way the Greeks could not have anticipated but in a way which would not require a reordering of the Romantic gestalt.

Individual romantic authors began to grope for ways out of the dilemma. Two of the most prominent, Victor Hugo and Emile Zola, integrated the individual within the community by placing an emphasis on human suffering in their works. This human dimension, particularly the attempt to show that human suffering was communal and not isolated, characterized many of the late romantics.

A practical solution to this fundamental problem was provided by Freud, who, while explicating the human internal reality, had the good sense to include the notion that all human beings experience similar versions of that reality. Empathy, particularly the artistic

conception of it, once again became possible. The Romantics, by virtue of Freud's addition, could once again create a mythopoeic reality -- a cosmos which linked humankind to both human nature and the natural world. Although this new mythopoeic conception was substantially more sophisticated than that adopted by the ancient priests and philosophers, it nonetheless provided essentially the same vision of the universe. The only remaining question, therefore, was how the literary journalists were to incorporate this new facet of human understanding in their work.

The Journalistic Point of View

Fledgling efforts at universalizing an internal psychological reality had, of course, begun almost when literary journalism itself began. While efforts at psychological understanding certainly extended into the 1920s and 1930s, they were not universally recognized by journalists and literary critics until Truman Capote's In Cold Blood. In that book, Capote had the audacity to put thoughts into the heads of the two men who would commit one of the most brutal mass murders of the era.[28]

> Dick waited, ate some jelly beans, impatiently gunned the motor, sounded the horn. Was it possible that he had misjudged Perry's character? That Perry, of all people, was suffering a sudden case of "blood bubbles?" A year ago, when they first encountered each other, he'd thought Perry "a good guy" if a bit "stuck on himself,""sentimental," too much "the dreamer." He had liked him but not considered him especially worth cultivating until, one day Perry described a murder, telling how, simply for "the hell of it" he had killed a colored man in Las Vegas -- beaten him to death with a bicycle chain. The anecdote elevated Dick's opinion of Little Perry. He began to see more of him, and, like Willie-Jay, though for dissimilar reasons, gradually decided that Perry possessed unusual and valuable qualities.

What Capote had done was to use the fiction writer's technique of point of view -- writing "through the eyes and mental perceptions of

a particular character" -- to convey thoughts and emotions. The technique was standard with fiction writers, but journalists had clung tenaciously to the belief that they could not report "what went on inside someone's head" because there was no certain way of ascertaining the truth of that particular internal reality. Capote, in one book, had crossed the barrier. In effect, what he told his fellow literary journalists was that by careful interviewing, and by the understanding of human nature that modern psychology and sociology were making available, it was possible for a journalist to penetrate his/her subject's internal reality and to transmit that reality to the reader.

What Capote did was so exceptional -- yet so controversial -- that many journalists experimented with the technique without making any attempts to extend its boundaries. James Mills' now famous article for Life magazine "The Panic in Needle Park" was a masterpiece of "showing -- not telling," all done from the point of view of the detective assigned to police that particular group of New York junkies.[29] Hunter Thompson took point of view perhaps to its romantic conclusion when, after a debauche of monumental proportions while covering the Kentucky Derby, he discovered the morning after.[30]

> My eyes had finally opened enough for me to focus on the mirror across the room and I was stunned at the shock of recognition. For a confused instant I thought that Ralph had brought somebody with him -- a model for that one special face we'd been looking for. There he was, by God -- a puffy, drink-ravaged, disease-ridden caricature...like an awful cartoon version of an old snapshot in some once-proud mother's family photo album. It was the face we'd been looking for -- and it was, of course, my own. Horrible, horrible....

But, the jump from point of view to journalistic psychological insight had not quite been completed.

It is difficult to pinpoint precisely when it was that journalists first decided to make the psychological leap. However, one of the

first instances of such a thematic use of psychological theory occurred when journalism professor Ken Metzler published his biography of the last year of Charles E. Johnson's life, Confrontation.[31] Johnson, president of the University of Oregon during the tumultuous late 60s and early 70s, had died in a one-car crash. But Metzler's extensive research -- much of it done according to the exacting interviewing standards of literary journalism -- led him to a different conclusion. After discussing Johnson's case with medical doctors and a psychiatrist, Metzler concluded that Johnson had been in the midst of a "fugue state" -- or psychological flight -- at the time of the wreck.[32] The concept of the fugue state dated back to Freud who generally applied the term as part of a broader diagnosis of hysteria. But what made Metzler's book remarkable was that it was the journalist himself -- even with the aid of extensive interviewing, who concluded that Johnson's car wreck had been caused by the man's own "internal reality" -- the need for flight -- for which the twentieth century had a well founded psychological explanation. No longer, it seemed, were journalists to be restricted by point of view. They, too, were capable of drawing conclusions.

While Metzler's book remained largely unknown, Woodward and Bernstein's The Final Days[33] brought the notion of psychological study -- or the romantic link with an internal reality -- into the fore of journalistic debate. While the authors themselves drew few psychological conclusions, the anecdotes they included in their history of Nixon's last days in the White House had a potent theme -- that the President himself had been psychologically incapable of governing. Historians, of course, had made similar speculations about Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt. But these speculations all centered on the impact of physical illness. Woodward and Bernstein

were the first journalists to root the cause of such paralysis to the psyche. The publication of the book and its sometimes controversial contents created a furor. But, the volume added momentum to the journalistic push into the psyche -- and hence into the irrational being within rational humankind.

Such reportage probably was brought to a new height by Norman Mailer, a literary journalist of long standing, who involved himself in the creation of what Mailer believed to be a new literary genre: the nonfiction novel. Mailer's Executioner's Song is, among many other things, a psychological portrait of Gary Gilmore, and Mailer had no hesitancy about articulating Gilmore's thoughts or the thoughts of many others in his exhaustive study.[34]

Mailer, however, did not stop with merely a psychological study. The book includes study of the particular culture of the State of Utah, and of the state of the American media and the society which it both nourishes and takes nourishment from. In short (actually in long, for the book ran to more than 900 pages), Mailer attempts to portray the total romantic reality -- internal and external, including human nature, cultural nature and the natural world itself with which Gilmore -- as an art student -- had some connection. While Mailer was not the only literary journalist to make and to succeed in this romantic attempt, his work and the work of others did begin to bring a resolution to the romantic dilemma. In that resolution -- another form of reality -- both ancient and modern -- stirred.

Literary Journalism Returns to the Mythopoeic

Since literary journalism sank its intellectual roots in the romantic tradition, it is perhaps to be expected that a complete

exploration of the romantic form of thought would lead to a new definition of journalistic reality. Such a new definition is certainly not intended to replace the classic order. Classicism, and all that it means when translated into a journalistic medium, continues to have many virtues, not the least of which is that it provides an ordered, rational and culturally accepted mode of thought. But, as journalists themselves are quick to note, it also omits a great many pieces of the whole. If the journalist's duty is -- as has been too often stated -- to explore and to retell the "truth," then it seems that literary journalism with its reliance on a oneness with nature, the value of emotion, a willingness to accept both an external and an internal reality, and a stubborn refusal to dichotomize psyche from soma, can portray another form of that same truth. It is a return to the mythopoeic form of truth, albeit with the aid of much modern scientific knowledge, insight and the benefit of more than 2,000 years of human experience.

The romantic -- or in this case the literary journalist -- by refusing to objectify himself apart from the universe which s/he inhabits has added another dimension to the romantic tradition -- although in very contemporary form. It is not that thought itself has been replanted into an exclusively mythical structure as it was in ancient times. Rather it is that, as Hericlitus said, "Wisdom is one thing. It is to know the <u>thought</u> by which all things are steered through all things." To which the literary journalist, steeped in the traditions of both romantic and mythopoeic thought, might add:

Here, for the first time, attention is centered not only on the thing known, but also on the knowing of it.

FOOTNOTES

1. H.G. Shenk with preface by Isaiah Berlin, The Mind of the European Romantics, New York: Frederick-Unger Publishing Co., 1966, p. xv. My deep gratitude also is extended to Professor William R. McReynolds with whom I taught a course at the University of Colorado School of Journalism in the spring semester, 1982, during which many of these ideas were developed.

2. Joseph M. Webb, "Historical Perspective on the New Journalism," Journalism History, Vol., No. 2, Summer, 1974, pp. 38-39.

3. Henri Frankfort, Mrs. H.A. Frankfort, John A. Wilson, Thorkild Jacobsen, Before Philosophy The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1946, p. 20.

4. For full text of the confrontation, consult The Holy Bible, King James Version, Exodus, Chapters 4-13.

5. _____. Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Selected Studies in Pivotal Ideas, Vol. III, p. 349.

6. Louis L. Snyder and Richard B. Morris eds. A Treasury of Great Reporting, Jack London, "San Francisco is gone!", originally published in Collier's Weekly, May 5, 1906, p. 269.

7. Ibid., _____. "A Pilot's fish-eye view of Midway as related to Walter Clausen," pp. 603-605.

8. Ibid., _____. "Gandhi's Assassination." "'Bapu (father) is finished'", p. 723.

9. Erik Erikson, Gandhi's Truth. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1969, p. 430.

10. Jacques Barzun, Romanticism and the Modern Ego, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1947, p. 56.

11. Shenk, The Mind of the European Romantics, p. 22.

12. Barzun, Romanticism and the Modern Ego, p. 83.

13. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract and Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, New York: Washington Square Press, 1967.

14. Shenk, The Mind of the European Romantics, p. 165.

15. Ibid., "Romantic Life," pp. 109-134.

16. Ibid. p. 187.

17. Michael J. Hoffman, The Subversive Vision: American Romanticism in Literature, New York: National University Publications, Kennikut Press, 1972, p. 155.

18. Ibid., p. 3.

19. Stephen Crane, Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, ed. Thomas A. Gullason, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979.

20. James Agee and Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, Co., 1980, p. 11.

21. Ibid., 11-12.

22. Ed. Tom Wolfe and E.W. Johnson, The New Journalism, New York: Harper & Row, 1973, pp. 204-218.

23. Tom Wolfe, The Right Stuff, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979.

24. Hunter Thompson, Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs, New York: Ballentine, 1966, p. 345.

25. Michael Herr, Dispatches, New York: Avon, 1978, p. 10.

26. Tom Wicker, A Time to Die, New York: The New York Times Book Company, 1975, p. 10.

27. Hoffman, The Subversive Vision, p. 8.

28. Truman Capote, In Cold Blood. New York: The New American Library, 1965, pp. 69-70.

29. Wolfe and Johnson, eds. James Mills, "The Detective," pp. 259-280.

30. Ibid., Hunter Thompson, The Kentucky Derby Is Decadent and Depraved, p. 186.

31. Ken Metzler, Confrontation, Nash: Los Angeles, 1973.

32. Ibid., p. 315.

33. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, The Final Days, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976.

34. Norman Mailer, The Executioner's Song, New York: Warner Books, 1979.